

Zion Methodist Church
Porchtown, Gloucester County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-665

HABS
NJ
8-MAL.V.
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

HABS
N.J.

G. MAL.V.

1-

Zion Methodist Church*
Porchtown, Gloucester County, New Jersey

Owners: The Trustees
(The Rev. Christian Ernst, Franklinville,
N. J., pastor)

Date of Erection: Zion M.E. Church 1834, per tablet
in front gable; rebuilt 1860(b)

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Present Condition: Original meeting house in good
condition

Number of Stories: One, with gallery on three sides;
no cellar

Materials of Construction:
Foundation - stone masonry rubblework
Exterior walls - timber frame, clapboarded
Interior walls - frame, plastered (under rear
gallery only)
Chimneys - brick
Roof - gable, wood shingled

Historical Data:

The plot upon which this 34 by 40 feet
frame building was erected in 1834 was acquired as
follows:

By deed of 6 April 1833, William
Porch and his wife Ruth, of Franklin Township,

*By resolution of the national church convention, 1940,
the name of this protestant denomination was changed
from The Methodist Episcopal Church to The Methodist
Church.

Gloucester County(a), conveyed to Mathias Richman, William Langley, John V. Porch, Mathias R. Crane, Jacob Porch, William Filer, and David Veal, the Trustees of Zion Methodist Episcopal Church of Franklin Township, and to their successors, "in consideration of the sum of one dollar and for the advancement of Religion and spread of the gospel and for the promotion of the Methodist Episcopal Church", a 1.38 acre plot in that township, having a frontage of some 242 feet on the northwest side of the "Public Road leading from Porch's Mill to Bridgeton". This conveyance was made "in trust nevertheless.... to the only proper use of the said Zion Methodist Episcopal Church and congregation.....to erect and

(a) Among this class of pioneers (in Franklin Township) was John Porch, who located at what is now known as Porchtown. His purchase embraced an area of 2500 acres in that immediate vicinity. Having a foresight of the necessities of himself and others, he built a grist mill on the stream running through his plantation. He also built a saw mill at that point, and since that time, about 1780, Porchtown has not been without both saw and grist mill until within a few years the saw mill has been abandoned and is fast going to decay. The property passed into the hands of William Porch and from him to his children, among whom the 2500 acres of land was divided. (Cushing and Sheppard, History of Counties of Gloucester, Salem, and Cumberland, New Jersey, 1883, p. 214).

Porchtown, a small hamlet on the southwest line of the township, adjoining Cumberland County, where there is a grist mill, blacksmith shop, shoe shop, and Methodist Episcopal Church and about seventy inhabitants. (Ibid. p. 219)

built a Preaching House thereupon(b) and other necessary improvements for the worship of Almighty God at all times, forever hereafter, as they shall see meet, and for no other purpose, use or intent whatsoever and to be subject to the rules, regulations and discipline of said Church".

In this deed recital is made that this small plot is cut from the corner of one of eight lots comprising 485 acres which the said William Porch had purchased of Samuel Porch, executor of the estate of John Porch, deceased, by deed of 1st August 1807.

Reference:

Search of title in Gloucester County land and probate records by Oscar F. Benjamin H.A.B.S. research editor, reported 5 August 1940

Lewis D. Cook

Supervising Historian

22 July 1940

Approved:

Seymour Williams

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.

District Officer

(b) Zion Methodist Episcopal Church at Porchtown. The people in this neighborhood at an early time determined to erect a house of worship, and accordingly, in 1828 they set about the work. With their own hands they felled and hewed timber, and in due time the structure was completed. Among the prominent founders of this church were the families of Porch, David, Veasy, Reuben Langley, and Matthias Crane, all noble and earnest workers. The church was flourishing at the commencement of its career. It had two important elements of prosperity - faithfulness and zeal, among its members, and during many years it was the principal place of worship in the vicinity. The house was rebuilt in 1860, but since that time the number of members in the society has diminished and although services are held more frequently than in former times, attendance on the services is not as large as then. (Cushing and Sheppard, cited above, p. 221).